

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04640 01 OF 02 161240Z

46

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 SSM-03 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 SAJ-01 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 DHA-02 ACDA-07 AID-05 SAM-01 OMB-01 EB-07

TRSE-00 SCCT-01 ORM-02 MC-02 /108 W

----- 035809

O R 161138Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8665

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 4640

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SY LE PLO UR XF

SUBJ: SYRIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER COMMENTS ON LEBANON AND
FOREIGN INTERVENTION

1. SUMMARY:

SYRIA IS CARRYING A HEAVY ECONOMIC BURDEN AS A RESULT
OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS BUT DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HAYDAR IS
OPTIMISTIC THAT CONDITIONS NOW EXIST FOR A START OF
POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE WARRING FACTIONS. SYRIA
WILL NOT COUNTENANCE COUNTRY-WIDE CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVES.
SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH EGYPT ARE IMPROVING. DAMASCUS-PLO
RELATIONS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. LIBYA HAS BEEN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 04640 01 OF 02 161240Z

TROUBLESOME BUT WILL PROBABLY NOT BREAK RANKS WITH THE ARAB

LEAGUE PEACEMAKING EFFORTS. IRAQ REMAINS IMPLACABLY HOSTILE TO SYRIA BUT POSES NO IMMEDIATE THREAT. THE SOVIETS HAVE BLUNDERED SERIOUSLY IN CRITICIZING SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. IN TWO HOUR DISCUSSION JULY 15, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MOHAMMAD HAYDAR READILY ANSWERED A NUMBER OF MY QUESTIONS BEARING ON SYRIA'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS. HE DWELT EXTENSIVELY ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PLO AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN LEBANON, BUT STARTED WITH A FEW GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES CREATED FOR SARG BY THE MASSIVE INFLUX OF LEBANESE REFUGEES TO SYRIA. THREE SYRIAN PROVINCES--TARTOUS, HOMS AND DAMASCUS--ARE UNDER PARTICULARLY ACUTE PRESSURE. REFUGEES IN THOSE AREAS ARE NOW LIVING IN TENTS, IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AND CROWDED IN WITH THEIR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, BOTH IN THE VILLAGES AS WELL AS THE CITIES OF THOSE PROVINCES. AS FAR AS FOODSTUFFS ARE CONCERNED, SHORTAGES ARE ACUTE COUNTRY-WIDE IN BREAD, SUGAR AND RICE. AS FOR OTHER SHORTAGES, HE CITED MAJOR EXPENSES JUST TO MEET THE DEMANDS FOR GASOLINE AND BOTTLED COOKING GAS FOR LEBANESE TAKING REFUGE IN SYRIA AND FOR THOSE WHO COME OVER ON QUICK SHOPPING EXPEDITIONS.

3. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS:

I ASKED HIM TO EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SIDON AREA, WHICH WAS TO BE COMPLETED JULY 15, AND SYRIAN ADVANCES AND CONTINUED COMBAT IN THE BAALBEK AREA. HAYDAR REPLIED THAT DAMASCUS HAD AGREED OVER A MONTH AGO WITH JALLUD TO WITHDRAW FROM SIDON. IT WAS OBLIGED TO RESPECT THIS AGREEMENT BUT IT ALSO HAD INSERTED INTO THE SAME AGREEMENT A PROVISION THAT THE JOINT ARAB FORCES WOULD MOVE INTO THE SYRIAN POSITIONS AT SIDON TO PERFORM THE SAME FUNCTION, I.E., TO INTERDICT ARMS MOVEMENT THROUGH THAT PORT. THE PLO HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN USING THE PORT OF TYRE THROUGHOUT TO GET MILITARY SUPPLIES INTO LEBANON BUT IT HAD SUCCEEDED IN IMPORTING ONLY LIMITED AMOUNTS. HAYDAR BELIEVED THERE WAS NOT A SERIOUS RISK THAT SIDON WOULD BECOME A WIDE OPEN ENTRY POINT FOR ARMS. IN ANY EVENT,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 04640 01 OF 02 161240Z

SYRIA CALCULATED THAT IT WAS ON THE EDGE OF A POLITICAL BREAK-THROUGH IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND THIS NATURALLY WOULD BE BASED ON A LASTING CEASE-FIRE.

4. SYRIAN-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS:

ASAD AND THE OTHERS WITH WHOM THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN DELEGATION MET IN DAMASCUS EARLIER THIS WEEK

HAD STRESSED THAT SYRIA WOULD PERMIT NO COUNTRY-WIDE CHRISTIAN "VICTORY." HAYDAR DOUBTED THAT THE CHRISTIAN SIDE WOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO PRESS FOR FURTHER VICTORIES IN LEBANON SUCH AS CLEANING OUT WEST BEIRUT OR ATTACKING OTHER REFUGEE CAMPS. THE CHRISTIANS ARE READY FOR A POLITICAL DIALOGUE FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, THEY KNOW THAT THEIR MARONITE UNITY WILL GIVE THEM THE ADVANTAGE OVER THEIR MUSLIM COUNTERPARTS AT THE BARGAINING TABLE. SECONDLY, THEY KNOW THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO IRRITATE SYRIA. (IN CONVERSATION LATER SAME DAY, FONMIN KHADDAM SAID HE SAW CONTRADICTORY CURRENTS WITHIN THE LEBANESE LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN CAMPS, BUT HE, TOO, FELT THAT THE CHRISTIANS WERE NOW READY TO PROCEED TO THE BARGAINING TABLE.)

EGYPTIAN ROLE:

HAYDAR DID NOT DWELL ON THE EGYPTIAN ROLE VIS-A-VIS LEBANON BUT COMMENTED THAT SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS HAD IMPROVED SOMEWHAT IN THE WAKE OF THE RIYADH CONFERENCE. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID HE ASSUMED WE WERE PLEASED WITH CURRENT ME POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. I REPLIED THAT NOTHING WOULD PLEASE US MORE THAN TO SEE AN END TO THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND A CONSOLIDATION OF GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN AND SYRIA. THESE WERE PREREQUISITES FOR PROGRESS ON A ME SETTLEMENT. I CERTAINLY HOPED THAT HIS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR A POLITICAL BREAK-THROUGH IN LEBANON WOULD PROVE AN ACCURATE PROPHECY. HE REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT ALONE IN FEELING OPTIMISTIC.

6. SYRIAN-PLO RELATIONS:

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 04640 01 OF 02 161240Z

THE PALESTINIANS ARE TIRED OF FIGHTING, PARTICULARLY IN THE WAKE OF THEIR RECENT DEFEATS ALONG THE LEBANESE COAST AND IN THE TEL ZA'TAR/JISR AL-BASHA CAMPS. THEY HAVE AT LAST BEGUN TO REALIZE THEY HAVE BEEN DUPED BY PLO ELEMENTS INTO BECOMING OVER-INVOLVED WITH LEBANESE INTERNAL POLITICS. WHILE SYRIA IS CRITICAL OF JUMBLATT, IT BELIEVES THAT IT WAS THE MARXISTS IN THE PLO WHO SUCKED THE PALESTINIANS INTO JUMBLATT'S LEFTIST COALITION RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND. HAYDAR EMPHASIZED THAT HE DISTRUSTED ANY PALESTINIAN WHO SPORTED A PARTICULAR POLITICAL LABEL. PALESTINIANS SHOULD RESTRICT THEMSELVES TO THE SOLE GOAL OF REGAINING WHATEVER IS POSSIBLE OF THEIR HOMELAND. DIVISIVE POLITICS AMONG PALESTINIANS ARE CHRONIC, BUT OVER THE PAST YEAR THIS TRAIT HAS BROUGHT THEIR CAUSE TO NEAR DISASTER.

7. THE PLO WAS SURPRISED AT SYRIAN SUCCESS IN TURNING THE RECENT ARAB DEBATE TO SYRIAN BENEFIT. JUST AS THE RECENT SERIES OF CHRISTIAN MILITARY VICTORIES HAVE KEPT THE PLO FROM ACHIEVING ITS MILITARY GOALS, ARAB LEAGUE ENDORSEMENT OF SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON HAS FRUSTRATED THE PLO'S IMMEDIATE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. THE PLO HAD PRESSED FOR THIS MEETING IN ORDER TO HAVE SYRIA INDICTED BY THE ARAB WORLD. THE OUTCOME OF THE LEAGUE'S DISCUSSIONS, THEREFORE, HELPED MOVE THE PLO TO SEEK RECONCILIATION WITH SYRIA.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04640 02 OF 02 161300Z

46

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 SSM-03 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

DHA-02 ACDA-07 AID-05 SAM-01 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00

SCCT-01 ORM-02 MC-02 SAJ-01 /108 W

----- 036075

O R 161138Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8666

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 4640

8. BUT RELATIONS BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND PLO CAN NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. WHETHER FATAH WAS ACTING ON ITS OWN AGAINST SAIQA IN BEIRUT IN EARLY JUNE OR WAS INSTIGATED TO DO SO BY AN OUTSIDE POWER REMAINS A MYSTERY. IN ANY

EVENT, PLO INGRATITUDE HAS EMBITTERED THE SYRIAN MILITARY. IN LATE 1973, FOR EXAMPLE, SYRIA STATIONED UPWARDS OF 2,000 OF ITS REGULAR ARMY PERSONNEL IN PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS THROUGHOUT LEBANON. THEY HAD STAYED THERE EVER SINCE, TO FULFILL THEIR MISSION OF OPERATING THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS DEFENDING THE CAMPS AGAINST ISRAELI RAIDS. SOME EVEN NOW ARE FIGHTING IN THE TEL ZA'TAR CAMP AT THE SIDE OF THE PALESTINIANS. MANY OF THESE SOLDIERS WERE ARRESTED AND ROUGHED UP BY FATAH IN JUNE. THIS WOULD NOT BE FORGIVEN BY THE SYRIAN MILITARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 04640 02 OF 02 161300Z

9. THE FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS HAVE EXPANDED WITHIN SYRIA TO THE POINT THAT THEIR OFFICES OUTNUMBER THOSE OF THE RULING BAATH PARTY. ALL OF THESE OFFICES HAVE ALSO BEEN USED AS ARMS DEPOSITORIES. THIS SITUATION MUST AND WILL BE CORRECTED. (COMMENT: WITH STRIKING CANDOR, HAYDAR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SYRIA HAD BEEN TOO GENEROUS IN ITS PAST SUPPORT OF THE PLO AND THE LEBANESE LEFTISTS BOTH IN TERMS OF ARMS AND MONEY.)

10. LIBYAN ROLE:

HAYDAR CHARACTERIZED SYRIA'S RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AS NOW BEING "ON THE CAUTIOUS SIDE." IN THE BEGINNING, JALLUD'S CONTRIBUTION AS A MEDIATOR HAD BEEN POSITIVE BUT HE HAS BECOME INEFFECTIVE. (COMMENT: HAYDAR ACCOMPANIED JALLUD TO BEIRUT ON SEVERAL TRIPS.) BOTH JALLUD AND QADHAFI STRONGLY RESENTED THE ARAB LEAGUE'S ASSUMPTION OF A PEACE MAKING ROLE IN LEBANON. THEY SEE THIS AS COMPETITION WITH LIBYA. JALLUD HAS AN UNPLEASANT HABIT OF SAYING ONE THING TO ASAD IN DAMASCUS AND SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT TO HIS PALESTINIAN AND LEFTIST CONTACTS IN BEIRUT. NONETHELESS, HAYDAR BELIEVES THE LIBYANS PROBABLY SEE IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO MOVE GENERALLY IN HARMONY WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE AND NOT TOTALLY INDEPENDENT OF IT. WHILE THEY RESENT THE LEAGUE'S ACTION, THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO BE READY TO BREAK RANKS. FURTHERMORE, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SLIP SUFFICIENT ARMS INTO LEBANON TO REVERSE THE EBBING FORTUNES OF THEIR CLIENTS. SUMMING UP, HAYDAR COMMENTED THAT LIBYANS HAVE AN EXTREMELY LIMITED BACKGROUND IN POLITICS AND ARE CONVINCED THEIR MONEY CAN SOLVE EVERYTHING.

11. IRAQ:

IRAQ REMAINS TOTALLY HOSTILE TO SYRIA'S ROLE IN LEBANON. HAYDAR HAS WARNED ASAD THAT AMONG OTHER GOOD REASONS FOR BRINGING THE LEBANESE CRISIS TO THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE

CONCLUSION IS THAT IRAQ WOULD PROBABLY MOVE MILITARILY
AGAINST SYRIA SHOULD DAMASCUS BECOME MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED
MILITARILY IN LEBANON. HE SEES NO IMMEDIATE DANGER OF SUCH
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 04640 02 OF 02 161300Z

A MOVE.

12. ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE
RECENT ASSASSINATION OF NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBER AHMED IZZAWI
AND THE GENERAL IRAQI CAMPAIGN AGAINST SYRIA, HAYDAR
REPLIED HE DID NOT THINK SO. (DAMASCUS 4471 NOTAL).
IZZAWI, HE NOTED, WAS AT THE TOP OF BAGHDAD'S ASSASSINATION
LIST FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, AS A FORMER
MILITARY OFFICER HE HAD MANY USEFUL LINES INTO
THE IRAQI ARMY WHICH EXCITED IRAQI CONCERN. SECOND,
EVER PRIOR TO 1966 WHEN THE BAATH SPLIT INTO SEPARATE
IRAQI AND SYRIAN PARTIES, THERE HAD BEEN STRONG PERSONAL
ANIMOSITY BETWEEN IZZAWI AND SADAM HUSSEIN. THE ORDER
FOR IZZAWI'S ASSASSINATION UNQUESTIONABLY CAME DIRECTLY
FROM HUSSEIN. HIS MURDER REVEALED INADEQUACIES IN SYRIAN
SECURITY AND FURTHER PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN, PARTICU-
LARLY AFFECTING THE SAFETY OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMAND
MEMBERS.

13. SOVIET ROLE:

MOSCOW HAS MADE A SURPRISING POLITICAL BLUNDER IN
ATTACKING SYRIA OVER ITS EFFORTS IN LEBANON. AS FAR AS
DAMASCUS IS CONCERNED, THE USSR IS THE ONLY POWER OUTSIDE
THE ME AREA WHICH STANDS TO GAIN BY CONTINUATION OF THE
LEBANESE CRISIS. THE LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY ENJOYS
MOSCOW'S FULL SUPPORT AND HAS BENEFITED HANDSOMELY FROM
THE LAST 16 MONTHS OF CIVIL WAR WHILE THE LEBANESE CRISIS
AS A WHOLE HAS BLOCKED ANY FORWARD MOVEMENT IN THE OVERALL
PEACE PROCESS. SYRIA KNOWS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE
ATTEMPTED TO SMUGGLE IN ARMS TO THE PLO/LEFTIST COALITION
BUT BELIEVES IT HAS BEEN LARGELY UNSUCCESSFUL.

14. COMMENT:

HAYDAR HAS IN THE PAST BEEN HAPPY TO DISCUSS POLITICAL
ISSUES BUT NEVER IN SUCH DETAIL. AS AN ALAWITE AND ONE
OF ASAD'S LONG-TIME INTIMATES, HE HAS EASY AND FREQUENT
ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT. WHILE HE WOULD REALIZE CERTAIN OF
HIS COMMENTS ABOVE, SUCH AS THOSE ABOUT THE SOVIETS,
WOULD BE WELCOME TO AMERICAN EARS, I DID NOT FEEL HE WAS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DAMASC 04640 02 OF 02 161300Z

DELIBERATELY TAILORING THEM FOR US.
MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, INTERVENTION, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC04640
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760274-1058
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760752/aaaabsxg.tel
Line Count: 335
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER COMMENTS ON LEBANON AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, UR, XF, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006